

History of the Quarter

The Mint Act of April 2, 1792, was the first official act to direct attention to the quarter's design. This Act specified that certain design features and legends would appear on authorized coins. One side of the coin had to include the year in which it was minted, an impression that symbolized liberty, and the actual word "Liberty." For more than 115 years, liberty was symbolized on the front of the coin by allegorical female figures (Lady Liberty) in the form of a bust or a full-length figure. The back of the quarter featured an eagle and the words "United States of America."

The representations of Lady Liberty and the eagle on the quarter during the late 18th and early 19th centuries were altered many times to keep up with the changing designs of other coins. Lady Liberty started out with flowing hair, then a draped bust, then a capped bust. Controversy arose in 1916 when Lady Liberty was suddenly shown standing with an exposed breast. This design was deemed too risqué and lasted only one year. In 1917, Lady Liberty's exposed breast was covered with a coat of mail. The eagle also underwent a few makeovers. It began as a small eagle that many thought looked too much like a pigeon. Over time, the eagle grew to become a grander and more patriotic heraldic eagle.

In 1932, the bicentennial of George Washington's birthday, a silhouette of Washington's head replaced Lady Liberty. This marked the second, but certainly not the only, time a coin would change from an allegorical figure to an historical one. The next bicentennial event to affect the quarter's design came in 1976, with the 200th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. To honor the event, a colonial drummer replaced the eagle on the back of the coin.

On October 20, 1996, Congress passed the United States Commemorative Coin Act of 1996 ("the Act") providing the framework for a possible new series of quarters to commemorate each of the 50 States. On December 1, 1997, the Commemorative Coin Program Act was signed into Public Law by President Bill Clinton. Over the next decade, the quarter will undergo 50 changes, to signify each state in the Union. Each state will be honored on an individual coin to generate the public's interest in coin design and State history.

The 50 State Quarters Program

The 50 State Quarters Program, began in 1999 and will continue through 2008. The Delaware quarter, depicting the historic horseback ride of Caesar Rodney, kicked off the United States Mint's 50 State Quarters Program on January 4, 1999. Each year, five quarters will be released into circulation. As specified in Public Law 105-124, Quarter designs are released in order they were admitted into the Union.

According to Public Law 105-124, "Congress finds that it is appropriate and timely to honor the unique Federal Republic of 50 States that comprise the United States; and to promote the diffusion of knowledge among the youth of the United States about the individual states, their history and geography, and the rich diversity of the national

heritage..." and to encourage "young people and their families to collect memorable tokens of all of the States for the face value of the coins."

The circulating commemorative quarters will be produced at the Philadelphia and Denver Mints. The proof versions will be produced at the San Francisco Mint.

The 50 State Quarters Program is self-supported. The program will cost the U.S. taxpayers literally nothing. In fact, the U.S. Government will make money on the 50 State Quarters Program. The cost to manufacture a quarter is about 5 cents, providing a profit of approximately 20 cents per coin. Mint profits go to the general fund of the U.S. Treasury to help fund U.S. Government operations, reduce the need for new or higher taxes, and reduce the Federal Government's debt. No tax revenues will be used in either the manufacture or the promotion of the state quarters. All costs are funded from the Mint's earned revenue.

Design Criteria

- Designs shall maintain a dignity befitting the nation's coinage.
- Designs shall have broad appeal to the citizens of the state and avoid controversial subjects or symbols that are likely to offend.
- Suitable subject matter for designs include state landmarks (natural and man-made), landscapes, historically significant buildings, symbols of state resources or industries, official state flora and fauna, state icons (e.g.. Texas Lone Star, Wyoming bronco, etc.), and outlines of the state.
- State flags and state seals are not considered suitable for designs.
- Consistent with the authorizing legislation, the states are encouraged to submit designs that promote the diffusion of knowledge among the youth of the United States about the state, its history and geography, and the rich diversity of our national heritage.
- Priority consideration will be given to designs that are enduring representations of the state. Coins have a commercial life span of at least 30 years and are collected for generations.
- Inappropriate design concepts include, but are not limited to logos or depictions of specific commercial, private, educational, civic, religious, sports, or other organizations whose membership or ownership is not universal.

All current inscriptions will appear on the quarter. The 50 States Commemorative Coin Program Act did not affect the current statutory requirement that United States coins shall have the inscriptions "In God We Trust", "Liberty," "United States of America," and "E Pluribus Unum," as well as a designation of the value of the coin and the year of minting or issuance. Three of the inscriptions ("United States of America", "E Pluribus Unum" and a designation of the value) are required to be placed on the reverse of each coin . However, on May 29, 1998, President Clinton signed Public Law 105-176, which allows for any inscription or inscriptions currently required to be on the reverse of the quarter to

be repositioned on the obverse of the new quarters. This law was enacted to provide for greater creative flexibility in developing the state designs.

The state quarters will be produced at both the Philadelphia and Denver Mints and distributed by the Federal Reserve through commercial banks throughout the country just as regular circulating quarters are today.

The only quarters minted for the next decade (1999 - 2008) will be the 50 State Quarters. However, the "Eagle" quarters will continue to be in circulation.

Although the entire set of 50 State Quarters can be collected for \$12.50, the coins are not considered collectibles because they are in regular circulation.

To request a design form packet contact Sharon Hambek in the Secretary of State's office at 402-471-6044 or at shambeck@nol.org. For more information about the Nebraska Quarter Design Program or to print the form for submitting your a design visit the Nebraska Secretary of State's website at **www.sos.state.ne.us**. If you would like to learn about other states and their programs, visit the U.S. mint website at **www.usmint.gov**.

Let the Nebraska Quarter designing begin!